

Bill Modernizes Federal Duck Stamp Access

WASHINGTON, DC – The U.S. House of Representatives today passed conservation legislation authored by Representative Rob Wittman (VA-1) aimed to increase online access for federal duck stamps. Through Wittman's legislation, sportsmen across the country will now be able to more easily access a federal duck stamp through an electronic program.

Wittman, a member of the Migratory Bird Conservation Commission and avid waterfowl hunter, stated: "I am proud to sponsor this legislation to modernize the sales and distribution of the federal duck stamp program without burdening the taxpayer. This is a small issue for many in our country, but a great step forward for the continued conservation of waterfowl, and sportsmen across the country."

For the past 77 years, millions of Americans, throughout this country, have strongly supported the Federal Duck Stamp Program. Each year, hunters, bird watchers, stamp collectors and wildlife enthusiasts have traveled to their local Post Offices, National Wildlife Refuges and sporting goods stores to obtain their annual stamp. In fact, since 1934, more than 120 million federal duck stamps have been sold nationwide. Of that total, 1.25 million were purchased in Virginia. With the sale of these stamps, more than \$800 million has been collected and deposited into the Migratory Bird Conservation Fund. These monies have been used to purchase or lease over 5.3 million acres of vital wetlands and essential waterfowl habitat that have been incorporated within the National Wildlife Refuge System.

Unlike most states, however, which allow consumers to obtain their annual fishing and hunting licenses through the Internet, there was no authority to purchase a federal duck stamp online. More than six years ago, the Federal Duck Stamp Program took a technological step forward with the enactment of the Electronic Duck Stamp Act of 2005. Under the terms of this law, a three-year pilot program was established allowing individuals to purchase their stamps online and the Fish and Wildlife Service was directed to evaluate the effectiveness of this new electronic program.

Today's legislation, authored by Rep. Wittman, will make the online purchase of federal duck stamps a permanent feature of federal law. Just like the pilot program, the electronic proof of purchase will both fulfill the requirements for waterfowl hunters to possess the stamp and allow

visitors free access to our nation's 553 national wildlife refuges. After 45 days, the proof of purchase will expire and the purchasers must possess the traditional paper stamp to receive its full benefit.

Wittman's legislation was supported by conservation organizations, including Ducks Unlimited and the Congressional Sportsmen's Foundation.

Scott Sutherland, Director of Ducks Unlimited Governmental Affairs Office said, "Because of its success in making federal duck stamps easier to obtain while preserving the heritage and utility of the traditional stamp program, Ducks Unlimited enthusiastically supports Congressman Wittman's proposal to make this program permanent."

Jeff Crane, president of the Congressional Sportsmen's Foundation, stated, "The Congressional Sportsmen's Foundation is supportive of Rep. Wittman's legislation, the *Permanent Electronic Duck Stamp Act of 2011*

, as it would make it easier for hunters to obtain a federal duck stamp and thereby fund conservation."

Congressman Rob Wittman represents the First District of Virginia. He serves on the House Natural Resources Committee and the House Armed Services Committee where he is the Chairman of the Oversight and Investigations Subcommittee. He also serves as Co-Chairman of the Chesapeake Bay Watershed Caucus.

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